**[An Exercise Guide for Kids](http://www.treadmillreviews.net/an-exercise-guide-for-kids/)**

Did you realize that just by swinging on a swing or climbing a tree you are exercising your body? Even when you walk to your mailbox or go up and down the stairs in your house you are getting exercise. The more you move the better it is for your body and mind. It is very important to get exercise every day of your life to help make and keep your body strong. Exercise helps to strengthen your heart and muscles, increase flexibility, maintain a healthy weight and simply make you feel good.

**Exercise is Good for Your Heart**

Did you know that your heart is a very important muscle that keeps blood pumping throughout your body every day? There are many exercises that you can do to actually strengthen your heart. These exercises are considered aerobic activity. Aerobic exercise conditions your heart and your lungs. It increases the amount of oxygen that is available to your body and makes your heart able to use oxygen in a more efficient manner. Your heart’s main job is to send oxygen through blood cells to your body’s different parts. Regular aerobic exercise makes your heart better at its main job. When you perform aerobic exercise (such as soccer) your breathing becomes faster, your heart starts pumping and you start to sweat. These signs are good because you know your body is working hard. What are some activities that are considered aerobic exercise? Jumping rope, gymnastics, roller blading, swimming, football, kickball and even hopscotch are all examples of fun aerobic exercise.

**Muscles Strengthen With Exercise**

When you do powerful things using your muscles you can strengthen them. Have you ever done push-ups or squats? These exercises are meant to strengthen particular muscles. Push-ups help strengthen the muscles in your upper body such as your arms and your chest area. Squats help to strengthen muscles in your lower body such as your legs and buttocks. Other muscle strengthening exercises include: running, bicycling, in-line skating and even tug-of-war. Many older people lift weights to strengthen their muscles. In adults and older teenagers this can even enlarge their muscles. Weight lifting is not recommended for young, growing children because it puts too much strain on the cartilage and tendons. Thankfully there are many other strengthening activities that are great for young kids so this is not a problem.

**Exercise Helps You to Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Food fuels your body through calories which are a form of energy. In order for your body to function (such as breathe and walk) you need a certain number of calories each day. When you are active your body requires more calories or energy, and when you are not active your body needs less calories. The reason you need more calories when you exercise is because your body burns or uses those calories to perform the exercise. There is a saying “calories in, calories out” that means as long as you eat only what your body needs (according to your activity level) your weight should remain about the same. It is when you consume more calories than what your body needs that it can become stored as excess fat and you gain weight.

**Exercise Can Make You More Flexible**

Flexibility allows you to stretch and bend your body without hurting it. It provides you with a full range of motion so you can move your legs and arms without tightness or pain. Performing flexibility exercises can make your body feel good. Stretching a little before you exercise and after helps to loosen your muscles so they do not become tight and cause you pain. After exercise your muscles are warm and pliable which makes them more conducive to stretching. Exercises that will help to improve your flexibility include: yoga, martial arts, dancing and gymnastics. Even simple stretches such as sitting on the floor with straight legs and leaning forward to touch your toes will help to increase your flexibility.

**Get Happy With Exercise**

Did you know that exercise can actually make you feel happy? When you exercise your brain releases endorphins which are chemicals that make you feel happier. Exercise also makes you happier because it is just plain fun to be able to run and play with your friends. It is also fun to really excel at something such as hitting a home run in baseball or kicking a goal in soccer. When your body is flexible and strong you have more energy and endurance to do the things you love to do. The human body was meant to move and it feels good to do it.

* [BAM! Body and Mind](http://www.bam.gov/sub_physicalactivity/)
* [Backyardigans Printable Exercise Cards](http://www.nickjr.com/printables/backyardigans-exercise-cards.jhtml)
* [Fitness by BrainPOP](http://www.brainpop.com/health/personalhealth/fitness/preview.weml)
* [Running Games](http://www.kidsrunning.com/krschoolgames.html)
* [What is Aerobic Activity and Why Should I do it?](http://k2.kirtland.cc.mi.us/~balbachl/aeroprin.htm)
* [Calorie Requirements for Kids](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/downloads/calreqtips.pdf)
* [Physical Games & Activities for Groups](http://wilderdom.com/games/PhysicalActivities.html)
* [How Much Activity Do Kids Need?](http://health.kaboose.com/active-kids/children-physical-activity-6.html)
* [PE Central’s Kids Programs](http://www.pecentral.org/kids_programs/home.shtml)
* [Health & Fitness Resources](http://www.k12.wa.us/HealthFitness/Resources.aspx)

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